

HOUSE JOINT MEMORIAL 65

49TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2009

INTRODUCED BY

Antonio Lujan

A JOINT MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH TO CONDUCT A STUDY TO DETERMINE THE NEED FOR SOCIAL WORKERS, THE COST OF GRADUATE SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION AND THE NEED FOR STUDENT LOAN FORGIVENESS FOR SOCIAL WORKERS.

WHEREAS, loan forgiveness programs encourage future professionals to pursue certain fields of study by offsetting incurred loan debt with payments for certain work-related requirements that must be fulfilled by the student borrower; and

WHEREAS, according to the board of social work examiners, New Mexico had only three thousand five hundred social workers licensed at the master's level in 2008; and

WHEREAS, according to the workforce solutions department, a beginning master's level social worker earns an average of .177074.1

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1 twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) per year, but graduates  
2 with an average debt of twenty-six thousand seven hundred  
3 dollars (\$26,700); and

4 WHEREAS, in fiscal year 2008, an estimated eighty thousand  
5 two hundred fifty-four consumers were served with mental health  
6 services, according to the annual report of the interagency  
7 behavioral health purchasing collaborative; and

8 WHEREAS, as a group, social workers are traditionally the  
9 largest provider of mental health services; and

10 WHEREAS, the New Mexico health policy commission manages a  
11 geographic access data system that collects and reports  
12 information on the distribution of selected health  
13 professionals in rural and underserved areas to inform policy  
14 decisions regarding the need for health professionals in those  
15 areas; and

16 WHEREAS, data regarding the availability or need for  
17 social workers is not included in that geographic access data  
18 system;

19 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE  
20 STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the department of health be requested  
21 to conduct a study to determine the need for social workers,  
22 the cost of graduate social work education and the need for  
23 student loan forgiveness for social workers; and

24 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the study identify current  
25 shortages of social workers, particularly in rural areas; and

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1 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the department of health  
2 collaborate with the New Mexico health policy commission to  
3 identify the steps necessary to include social workers in the  
4 geographic access data system; and

5 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the study develop criteria for  
6 awarding student loan forgiveness to social work students; and

7 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the department of health  
8 consult with the New Mexico chapter of the national association  
9 of social workers and an association representing social work  
10 students in conducting the study; and

11 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the findings and  
12 recommendations of this study be presented to the interim  
13 legislative health and human services committee by October 1,  
14 2009; and

15 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this memorial be  
16 transmitted to the secretary of health.

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